

REMINISCING

A couple stories that may be of interest to our good friend, Al Lees.

I had attended the Westport Fair at an early age; always accompanied by my parents. By the time I was twelve we boys were allowed to "cruise" the Fair grounds, visit the displays and participate foot races, games along the mid-way (if we had a quarter in our pockets).

Soon we had to resort to "less expensive entertainment", visit the bird and animal buildings, pens.

The cattle, pigs, sheep, goats etc. were housed at the extreme South end of the grounds.

Five of we boys "were taking it all in" when we heard a hair-raising racket; high pitched squeals, grunts, tearing of boards. Very cautiously we circled the area, slowly closing in on the disturbance, eventually we arrived.

The year was 1924. Andrew Lees had been known for many years (so Pa told me) for raising prize winning "white" pigs, (China, I believe). He knew exactly what he was doing, competitors could not begin to cut into his territory, Blue Ribbons everywhere.

On this particular day things changed (temporarily for) his prize sow, penned next to someones "black boar".

They had been penned for nearly a week; everything serene. Mother Nature was to be blamed for what was transpiring, the squealing, grunting, rending of the four inch thick planks.

We observed; the boar was oblivious of it (no doubt, careless, as I look back upon it). In a few minutes he had gained access to her pen. We boys were fascinated, dumb-founded, frightened, (you name it, we were it).

Grandpa Lees came onto the scene. He stooped and picked up a two by four, lying in front of his pen, raised it as if to strike the boar. He lay it down and said "too late now" adding "don't you boys fall into the pen, the black one could be working up an appetite". Little did we know.

Shortly after that I began Junior High at Westport High School. There were some warm Fall days so Albert (Barney) Cornell and I would ride our bikes to Central Village (four miles North). On the way home (down by Mr. Lees) farm, North of Cornell Road, right on the hill, big barn across the road-East, we would begin to get thirsty.

He had a hand-dug well just a few feet North of his kitchen door; the "Old Oaken Bucket" type of well. I knew the water was good and cool (Pa had told me so). He used to stop and have a drink with "Andrew" when he was walking home from cutting wood a half mile North, down Joe Ball's lane-East (Asa Allen's wood lot). Al, there are a couple of old-timers, eighty when I was ten.

Barney and I stopped; Mr. Lees came out of his barn, headed for the house, hesitated a moment and said "did you go to the Fair?" Yes Sir. Were you by the pigs with a gang of boys? Yes Sir. Want a drink of water? Yes Sir.

We walked to the well. I said "Mr. Lees, can I draw it?" Nope, afraid you will let it go down fast. I said Mr. Brown showed me how to handle it, he said "Frank Brown"? Yes sir.

Frank lived in the last house at the South end of Westport Point- West side (Thanksgiving Lane, as that part of the original road was known).

I hit a "talkative" subject when I mentioned Frank. Your Grandpa and he swapped meat for fish (vice versa) for many years. We drank heartily and was invited back.

Mr. Lees told me of the time Pa was walking home from the wood lot at ten thirty in the morning "leaving for home early aren't you, Elmer? Yes, Andrew, I have a boot full of blood; axe went through a frozen stick quick as a flash.

His axe was always sharp ; cut through his boot and into the bone at the base of his big toe. When Pa arrived home Ma said he poured "a lot" of blood from his short legged boot, a lot had "oozed" out the cut. He said he dared not remove the boot before he got home, it was continuing to swell.

I recall "looking into the cut bone" of Pa's foot and nearly lost my supper.

Pa said your grandfather was an honest, well respected, hard-working gentleman. He and his wife brought up the same kind of a family; I knew them all.

As Howard Cosell would say "thats the way it was, sixty five years ago".

Irene, I have your article before me reference "Halloween", pranks etc." Yes, we kids pulled a few but I recall a couple that only the "big boys" could perform. Thought them worth mentioning because I believe it will be a long time before they are duplicated.

An Adamsville man had been courting our next door neighbor for over fifty years by the time I was twelve years of age.

He drove to the Point in a beautiful horse-drawn "buggy"; painted, striped and varnished. On Halloween night he saw fit to spend the night at the Point.

He put his buggy in the "open front shed" at the Westport Point Methodist Church and the horse in the accompanying stalls.

The next morning Ma looked out our South door and saw the buggy straddling the peak of the shed; shafts and front wheels facing us "North"; rear wheels on South side of peak, twenty five feet above the ground.

The man paid to have it lowered to the ground; no damage involved. We found out, later who "performed the act", the same big boys that took it down. One of them was a cousin of mine, another, a name-sake and two good friends. They were about twenty years of age, at the time and "very rugged".

Shortly after Ma noticed the buggy, Pa went North to Till Sowle's well for our morning bucket of drinking water. As he approached the Point Grammar School he noticed a "foreign" object pulled to the very top of the flag pole.

It was the School Principal's desk chair. No locks or windows were broken but somehow the pranksters got the chair out. That is one thing I never found out, how they did it, a gain, no damage done. Those four "big boys" took that secret to their graves.

BY

CARLTON T. MANCHESTER SR.